

This is the first time an albino rat of this species has been encountered during our studies and there are no published records of an albino of *Rattus blanfordi*. In the laboratory, several attempts were made to breed wild caught *Rattus blanfordi* and these were unsuccessful because of the failure of the wild caught female to accept a male in captivity. No mating could be achieved even after changing the partners. Since albinism carries with it the trait of tameness, a normal male was provided in the cage containing the albino female. Mating was observed in captivity and the albino female delivered three normal coloured young ones after a gestation period of 25-26 days. The albino female was again provided with a normal male after the babies were weaned, and another two normal coloured young ones were delivered after a gestation period of 26 days.

The albino female and the young ones are kept alive at Sagar Field Station for further observation and breeding experiments.

VIRUS RESEARCH CENTRE,¹

POONA,

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7. REDNECKED GREBE *PODICEPS GRISEIGENA* (BODDAERT) SIGHTED IN WEST PAKISTAN

(With a plate)

On January 14, 1967, whilst working on the International Wild-fowl Census at Lal Suhanra, the writers had a clear view of a bird which was identified as *Podiceps griseigena*. Since this species is not listed by Ripley (1961) or by Stuart Baker (1929) it is believed that this may constitute a new record for the subcontinent.

Lal Suhanra (29° 31' N., 71° 55' E.) situated approximately 16 miles east of Bahawalpur City in West Pakistan, comprises a chain of tamarisk-studded jheels covering an area of some 10 square miles where surplus canal water is stored in summer. Food supplies for diving birds were apparently abundant as evidenced by the numbers

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of diving duck (including Smew), cormorants and darters wherever areas of open water occurred.

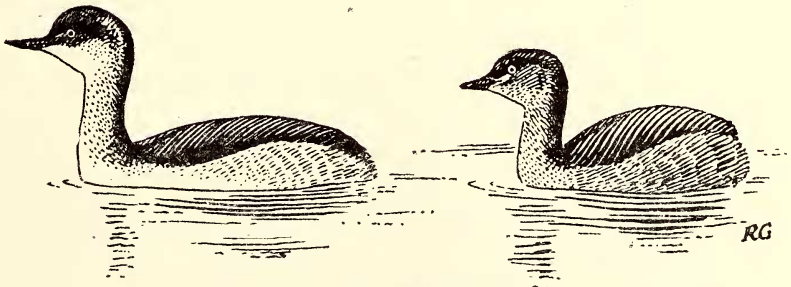
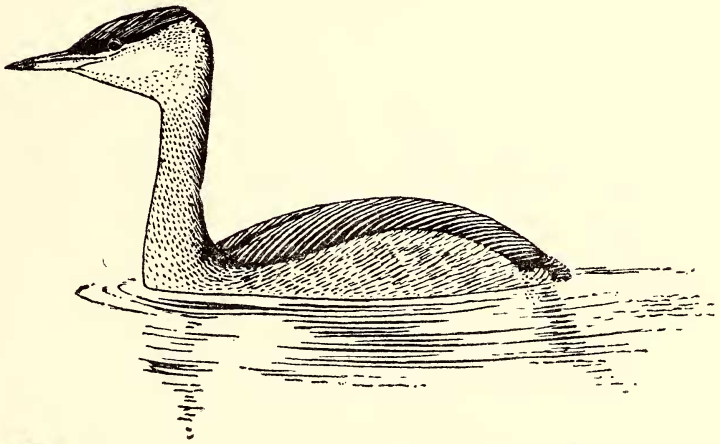
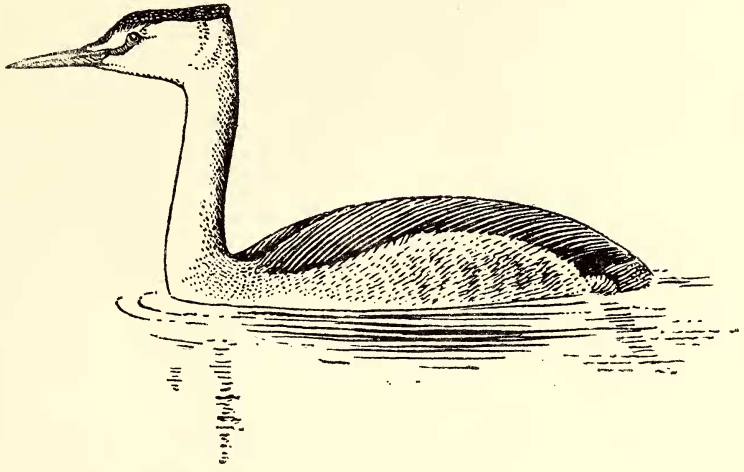
The bird was sighted at a distance of about 200 yards, and studied through 20×70 binoculars and telescopes ×60 mounted on tripods, at 1.30 p.m. in bright daylight and with the sun behind. It was realised at once that it was too small to be a Great Crested Grebe and at the same time too large and long in the neck to be a Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps caspicus*, both species with which we were familiar. A solitary Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* had been watched on an adjacent strip of open water and moreover a nearby group of about 40 Little Grebes *Podiceps ruficollis* provided ample size comparison.

When the bird was scrutinised minutely, it was noted that the crown down to the level of the bill and eye was dark in colour, whereas the Great Crested Grebe had clearly shown white above the eye and bill. The sides of the head and cheeks showed white in a wedge-shaped pattern outlined by the dark grey of the hind neck. The rest of the neck was grey in colour, which also served to emphasize the former character.

Peterson (1966) was consulted at the time, from which the writers were convinced that this bird could only have been a Rednecked Grebe *Podiceps griseigena* in winter plumage. It should be added that one of the writers (T.J.R.) is familiar with this species in British Columbia.

Having only a 12-bore shotgun and no means of getting closer to the bird, there was no question of securing it, but in view of the circumstances it is believed that this sighting is worthy of record.

The recorded distribution of *Podiceps griseigena* is shown in map form by Dementiev & Gladkov (1951), and the breeding distribution also by Voous (1960). It has a discontinuous Holarctic breeding distribution—being absent in central Siberia—and winters in the coastal regions of the United States, China, the Mediterranean and southern Caspian. Of particular interest to the subcontinent are the breeding grounds of Kazakhstan. Of these Dolgushin (1960) mentions in particular the Syr Darya delta and the Balkhash basin, but adds that information on the species has recently greatly improved and it seems that the species is much more widespread than formerly supposed. The winter quarters of these Kazakhstan birds are as yet unrecorded—there is only one record of the species being found in Kazakhstan in winter. He mentions however that the species has been found 'in the mountains' on spring passage.



Great Crested Grebe

Rednecked Grebe

Blacknecked Grebe

Little Grebe